

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resource Commission

ITEM

12

DECISION

TOPIC

LIP Grant to TNC for Conservation Easement

The NRC is requested to approve an agreement between the Land Incentive Program (LIP) grant program and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). IDNR will reimburse TNC up to \$160,000.00 for actual expenses incurred by TNC for costs relating to the acquisition of the easement, to include the easement price, survey, closing costs, and indirect costs. This project is funded with Landowner Incentive Program Tier II funds.

TNC proposes to acquire a permanent conservation easement over approximately 190 acres, known as the Reese Homestead, located in the Turin Special Landscape Area of the Loess Hills in Monona County, Iowa. The conservation easement will assure that the Reese Homestead property will be retained forever substantially undisturbed in its natural, scenic, agricultural, and open space condition, and will prevent any use of the property that will significantly impair or interfere with the conservation values of the Reese Homestead, as defined in the easement. Enforcement of the terms and conditions of the easement shall be the responsibility of TNC and its successors or assigns, as set forth in the easement.

The intact prairies on the property are large enough to hold viable populations of the Ottoe skipper (Hesperia ottoe), and the regal fritillary (Speyeria idalia), both rare butterfly species. The conservation and natural resource values of the Loess Hills are threatened by impending suburban and rural sprawl, mining of the loess soils to use as fill dirt, and land management practices that allow invasive species to encroach into the native prairie pasturelands. The Protected Property has been utilized most recently for recreational use such as hiking and natural areas management as well as historically used for livestock grazing. The Protected Property contains significant remnant prairie which is increasingly threatened by residential development in the area. Preservation of the Protected Property will also provide a significant public benefit by supplementing national, state and local efforts to protect the Loess Hills.

The IDNR is working with TNC to purchase this easement and not purchasing it on our own for multiple reasons: 1) The easement is in TNC's priority landscape where they already hold and enforce many other easements, 2) It will streamline enforcement and monitoring for IDNR to have TNC hold the easement, and 3) The property is an important property for protection of Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Loess Hills landscape and the landowners want to work with TNC to protect their property.

Dr. Dale Garner, Bureau Chief
Conservation and Recreation Division
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